

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2780

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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LDUESJO/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 3961

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: REACTION TO ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COUNCIL

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1323 (DTG 111415Z FEB 76)

BEGIN SUMMARY: A GREAT DEAL OF COMMENT GREETED THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FORMATION OF AN ADVISORY COUNCIL. THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS GENERALLY CRITICIZED THE MAKE UP OF THE PROPOSED BODY AS BEING UNBALANCED AND OF NOT RECOGNIZING THAT THE PARTIES COULD COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF MORE THAN 80 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY'S VOTERS. THE UNREGISTERED PARTIES, THE LABOR UNIONS AND THE CAMPE-SINO GROUPS GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL. EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE OPPOSED TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL, IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES WILL EVENTUALLY DECIDE TO JOIN. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF REACTION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL. THE LEADERS OF THE
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TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES ARE VOCALLY DISSATISFIED

WITH BEING ALLOTTED ONLY THREE VOTES IN THE 48-MAN COUNCIL. THEY ARGUE THAT THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES HAVE THE SYMPATHY OF MORE THAN 80 PER CENT OF THE VOTERS AND SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED PROPORTIONAL RECOGNITION OF THIS FACT IN THE ALLOTMENT OF SEATS. THE NATIONALIST AND LIBERAL PARTIES APPOINTED A JOINT COMMITTEE TO PREPARE A REPORT FOR THEIR CENTRAL COMMITTEES. LIBERAL LEADER MODESTO RODAS ALVARADO AND NATIONALIST LEADER RICARDO ZUNIGA AGUSTINUS AVOIDED COMMENT ON THE ADVISORY COUNCIL. HOWEVER, ANOTHER PROMINENT NATIONALIST, ROBERTO GALVEZ BARNES, CRITICIZED THE INCLUSION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE SUPREME COURT AND QUESTIONED THE VOTING WEIGHT GIVEN TO VARIOUS SOCIAL GROUPS. RAMON VILLEDA BERMUDEZ AND JOSE PINEDA GOMEZ OF THE LIBERAL PARTY WERE EQUALLY FORTHRIGHT IN CRITICIZING THE IMBALANCE OF VOTING STRENGTH IN THE COUNCIL.

2. THE INNOVATION AND UNITY PARTY (PINU) AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) WERE TACITLY RECOGNIZED AS LEGAL PARTIES IN THE DECREE EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE NOT FULFILLED THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PRESENT ELECTORAL LAW TO ALLOW THEM TO BE REGISTERED AS POLITICAL PARTIES. MIGUEL ANDONIE FERNANDEZ, PINU LEADER, SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE FORMATION OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS NECESSARY AND THAT IT COULD BE VERY USEFUL IF PROPERLY ORGANIZED. ALFREDO LANDAVERDE, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PDC, REMARKED THAT THE COUNCIL WAS OF IMPORTANCE BECAUSE IT WOULD INEVITABLY AFFECT THE LIFE OF THE COUNTRY AND SAID THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE WOULD STUDY THE SITUATION BEFORE ANNOUNCING ITS DECISION. RIGOVERTO PADILLA RUSH OF THE PRO-SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY COMPLAINED THAT THE WAY IN WHICH THE COUNCIL HAD BEEN COMPOSED WAS UNJUST BECAUSE IT DID NOT INCLUDE ALL THE "PROGRESSIVE" FORCES OF THE COUNTRY.

3. THE PRESIDENT OF COHEP (COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE), CAMILO RIVERA GIRON, REMARKED THAT THE COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL DID NOT GRANT FULL REPRESENTATION TO ALL SOCIAL SECTORS, BUT SAID COHEP HAD NOT YET ADOPTED AN OFFICIAL POSITION. THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF T G CTH (CONFEDERATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF HONDURAN WORKERS), ANDRES VICTOR ARTILES, PRAISED THE FORMATION OF THE COUNCIL AND SAID THAT IT OFFERED THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF HONDURAN SOCIETY A CHANCE TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON MATTERS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. JULIN MENDEZ, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CAMPESEÑOS (ANACH), STATED THAT THE COUNCIL OFFERED THE HONDURAN PEOPLE A GENUINE CHANCE FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE NATION'S LIFE.

4. THE CONSERVATIVE DAILY LA PRENSA PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL CRITICIZING THE PREPONDERANCE OF VOTES THE GOVERNMENT AND "SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVES" WOULD HAVE IN RELATION TO THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE EDITORIAL SAID THAT THE MAKE UP OF THE COUNCIL WAS AGREEABLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT BUT NOT THE COUNTRY. THE LIBERAL DAILY TIEMPO ISSUED AN EDITORIAL THAT CALLED THE FORMATION OF THE COUNCIL A STEP FORWARD BUT POINTED OUT THAT IT SUFFERED A NUMBER OF LIMITATIONS.

5. BEGIN COMMENT: IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE TRADI-

TIONAL PARTIES WOULD CRITICIZE THE NEW ADVISORY COUNCIL BECAUSE THEY ARE TREATED AS ARE ALL THE OTHER GROUPS AND NOT AS PREDOMINANT POLITICAL FORCES. IN THEIR TALKS WITH THE CHIEF OF STATE PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF THE COUNCIL, THE PARTIES HAD CALLED FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION BASED ON THE LAST ELECTION. THE REFUSAL OF THE GOVERNMENT TO AGREE TO SUCH A PROPOSAL PUTS THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND THEIR PRIVATE SECTOR ALLIES IN A DECIDEDLY MINORITY POSITION IN THE COUNCIL. HOWEVER, THE COUNCIL WILL BE THE SCENE OF IMPORTANT ACTIONS SUCH AS THE DRAWING UP OF THE ELECTORAL LAW FOR 1979 AND WILL OFFER THE PARTICIPANTS A FORUM FROM WHICH THEY CAN EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS TO THE PUBLIC. GIVEN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT, AFTER PROLONGED COMPLAINING, THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES WILL JOIN THE COUNCIL. END COMMENT.
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